

2022 Regional Legislative Priorities



for the **757**



Coastal Resiliency

- Create the Virginia Commonwealth Flood Board (CFB).
 - The challenge of flooding is a statewide issue which requires the needed resources, staff and organizational structure to ensure that Virginia can address this issue in an ongoing, holistic and collaborative manner.
 - The CFB would direct and prioritize state and federal funding for flood mitigation, ensure collaboration and alignment among State agencies, and coordinate flood mitigation planning and adaptation efforts.
 - The CFB would be similar to the Commonwealth Transportation Board which meets on a regular basis to address transportation needs and issues in Virginia. The CFB would serve a similar role for statewide flooding issues.



Elizabeth River Crossings (ERC) Toll Agreement



- Support efforts to mitigate the impact of the Downtown and Midtown Tunnel Tolls on our Region's residents and businesses.
 - Current toll agreement has significant impacts on the residents and businesses of the Hampton Roads region.
 - Data shows that these tolls are having a regional impact.
 - HRTPO has established an ERC Task Force to work with the Commonwealth on potential strategies to address this issue.
 - Explore all options to reduce toll rates for our residents and businesses.

Offshore Wind

- Sustain efforts to support and promote the offshore wind industry and make the Hampton Roads region a hub for supply chain jobs to support this emerging industry.
- The region's geographic location, harbor and specialized workforce position the 757 to be the hub to support wind turbines planned for construction along the east coast.
- Request that the General Assembly establish the Offshore Wind Supply Chain and Workforce Development Fund to assist Hampton Roads companies in their efforts to participate in the offshore wind supply chain. This fund would be used by companies to offset some of the costs to support this emerging industry. Funds could be used for worker training/certification, new product development or repositioning, equipment upgrades, and implementing new operational processes to support offshore wind.

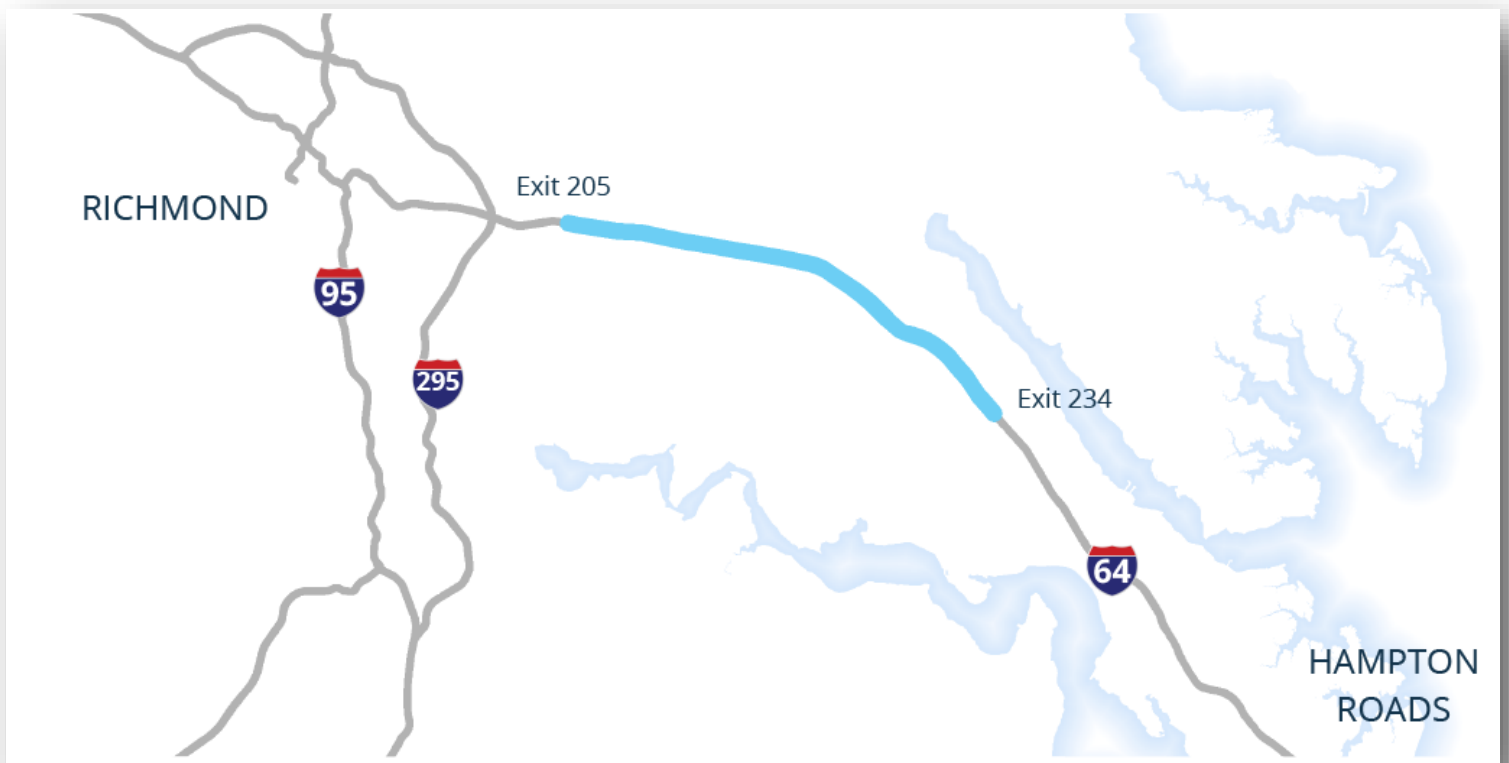


Economic Development/Site Readiness

- Support funding programs and policies that assist local governments with preparing shovel ready sites for economic development and job creation.
- The Hampton Roads region has utilized funding through the GO Virginia program to advance regional economic development sites through the Tier-system utilized by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP).
- This regional approach has been viewed as a model program in Virginia for preparing shovel-ready economic development sites.
- Important to support the continuation of funding for programs that support regional efforts to advance economic development site readiness.

Complete the I-64 Gap Between Hampton Roads & Richmond

- Request State/Federal funding to finish the I-64 Gap between Hampton Roads and Richmond.
 - The Hampton Roads region has completed three phases of I-64 improvements on the Peninsula to west of Williamsburg using predominantly local/regional tax monies through the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC).
 - The Commonwealth has completed improvements between I-295 near Richmond eastward to the Bottoms Bridge Road interchange.
 - A 29-mile gap exists that must be improved to ensure a reliable transportation connection between Hampton Roads, Richmond and the I-95 corridor.
 - The estimated construction cost for the Gap is between \$600 and \$700 million.
 - Approximately 20 of these miles are located outside of the Hampton Roads region.
 - Completing this gap is critical to support our military, the Port of Virginia and the Commonwealth's tourism economy.
 - The completion of the I-64 Gap is also supported by the RVA/757 Megaregion, and is consistent with goals for completing an I-64 Innovation Corridor between Hampton Roads and Richmond.



Broadband/Fiber

- Support funding programs and policies that advance regional efforts to develop interconnected and modern fiber networks.
- The Hampton Roads region is planning a fiber network that will connect to the subsea cables that have come ashore in Virginia Beach and spread this ultrafast service throughout the 757 region.
- The first phase of this effort is the southside fiber ring – the procurement process is currently underway for the construction of this fiber ring. The next phase of this effort will expand this fiber network to the Peninsula.
- Current State funding programs for broadband place priority on last mile service to rural areas.
- State funding programs should include funding opportunities for middle mile/dark fiber networks that support urban, suburban, and underserved areas.



Alternative Funding Source for Transportation

- As automobiles become more efficient and electric vehicles become more prominent, the amount of gasoline purchased is expected to decline.
- It is expected that the gasoline tax will continue to diminish as a viable funding source for needed transportation improvements.
- Support the identification of alternative funding sources for transportation improvements.



Increased State Funding for Planning District Commissions

- Planning District Commissions (PDCs) play a critical role in coordinating regional cooperation and strategies that strengthen our regional economies and improve the quality of life for the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- PDCs also serve a critical role by supporting state agencies in program and project delivery which results in cost savings for the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- In FY 2022, the HRPDC receives \$165,943 as a base allocation from the Commonwealth of Virginia. While this amount represents a \$14,000 increase, it is more than \$200,000 less than the HRPDC received from the Commonwealth in 2001.
- State funding should reflect the critical role that PDCs play within their regions and the support and cost savings PDCs create for the Commonwealth of Virginia.



Increased Flexibility for Public and Regional Bodies to Hold Electronic Meetings

- Experiences over the past 18 months illustrate that electronic meetings can increase public participation and reduce the need for travel.
- Current provisions within the Code of Virginia are very restrictive regarding the ability of public and regional bodies to conduct electronic/virtual meetings outside of a declared State of Emergency.
- While the importance of in-person meetings is recognized, the General Assembly should consider providing increased flexibility for public bodies and regional bodies to hold electronic/virtual meetings, when deemed appropriate.



Preserving and Expanding Tree Canopy

- Support legislation to provide local governments with local option/authority in the reforestation, preservation, and management of urban forests.
- Urban forests play an important role to capture and store carbon, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, reduce energy use, and mitigate urban heat islands and their health effects.



Housing

- Support the continuation of efforts to appropriate funding for housing programs and projects.
- Review enabling legislation at the State level to ensure that all localities have consistent local option/authority to implement tools such as inclusionary zoning and impact fees.

Oppose Concept of a Proposed Solid Waste Tax to Support State Parks/Conservation Efforts

- The region supports park and conservation efforts, but a more related funding source is more appropriate. No connection between solid waste fee/tax and parkland or conservation efforts.
- Concept is also opposed by the Southeastern Public Service Authority (SPSA).

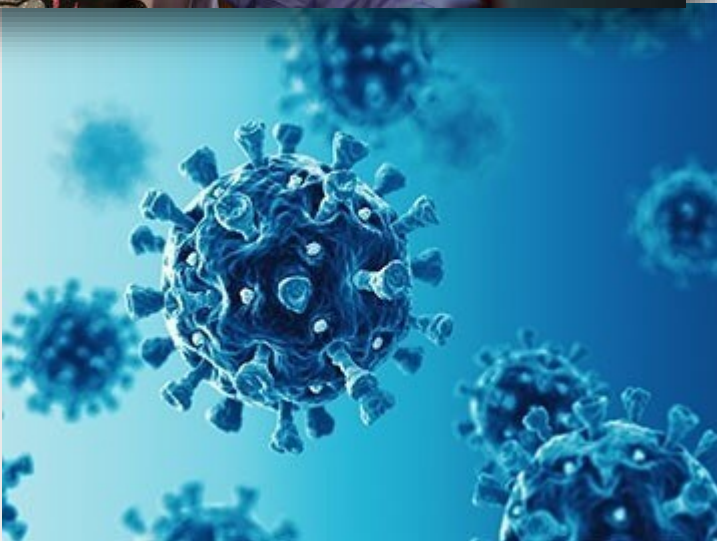
Support Revisions to Public Notification Requirements for Discretionary Land Use Requests

- In response to excessive costs, unreliability of services and an overall decline in readership of print newspaper, localities are seeking alternative methods to provide public notice that reflect current trends, are more effective, and are more cost efficient.



Public Health Districts

- Request that the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) evaluate the structure and resources for Public Health Districts.
- Evaluate lessons learned from the COVID pandemic and recommend improvement strategies for Implementation.
- Address challenges on a regional level





Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI)

- Sustain UASI funding levels for the Hampton Roads region.

Increase in Funding for School Construction and Modernization

- Support the continuation of efforts to provide increased state funding for K-12 public education.
- Evolving technology and facility needs require funding to ensure that our K-12 facilities remain modern and can meet today's public education best practices and needs.



Improved Passenger Rail Service

- Support efforts and projects that promote higher speed passenger rail service between Hampton Roads, Richmond and the Northeast Corridor.
- The 3rd train to Norfolk is scheduled to begin in Spring 2022.
- Newport News Multimodal Center is due for completion in Spring 2023, with the 3rd train to Newport News arriving in 2026.
- Improved passenger rail service will decrease traffic on I-64 and benefit the military and Port of Virginia, but we must improve the timing and reliability of this service.
- Request assistance from the Commonwealth and Virginia Passenger Rail Authority to provide enhanced service between Hampton Roads and Richmond.

